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RESEARCH CAREER SCIENTIST PROGRAM AND AWARDS

1. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Notice announces programmatic changes to the Research and Development (R&D) non-clinician Ph.D. scientist program, including an expansion of the Research Career Scientist Program. Salary support for non-clinician Ph.D. scientists historically has been available through a variety of mechanisms, including Merit Review support and the Research Career Scientist Program. This VHA Notice describes an expansion of the Research Career Scientist Program to include Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D) and coordinated administration by Medical Research Service (MRS), Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D), and RR&D. All non-clinician Ph.D. scientists who are principal or co-principal investigators on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funded peer-reviewed research programs and salaried by VA R&D will be included.

2. Non-clinician Ph.D. scientists contribute to VA research programs not only because of their direct contributions to scientific knowledge, but because they serve as mentors for clinician and non-clinician investigators. Thus, they furnish an important expertise that complements the research programs of the clinical staff. There are three designations available to non-clinician Ph.D. scientists under the Research Career Scientist Program. Designations of Assistant Research Scientist and Research Scientist automatically are applied to Ph.D. scientists funded by a VA peer-reviewed research program at the entry or advanced level, respectively. The Research Career Scientist award is a means of recognizing the achievements and contributions of selected non-clinician Ph.D. scientists to VA research. The program is available through MRS, HSR&D, and RR&D. The laboratories of non-clinician Ph.D. scientists must be located in VA medical centers.

3. Assistant Research Scientist

a. The titles Assistant Medical Research Scientist (for MRS), Assistant Health Service Research Scientist (for HSR&D) and Assistant Rehabilitation Research Scientist (for RR&D) apply to recently trained scientists seeking an independent research career in VA. Non-clinician Ph.D. scientists who are awarded funding through a mentored, entry-level research program, such as the Merit Review Entry Program (MREP) from MRS or similar program from HSR&D or RR&D, will receive the Assistant Research Scientist designation. Scientists designated as an Assistant Research Scientist may receive salary support consistent with percent effort in their research funding. There is no separate application process for Assistant Research Scientist.

NOTE: In Medical Research Service, the MREP Program was previously referred to as Type II Merit Review.

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b. The Assistant Research Scientist designation is for the term of research funding and is not renewable. Salary support may be extended for up to 6 months following termination of entry-level research support, provided efforts are made to secure continued funding.

4. Research Scientist

a. The title Medical Research Scientist (for MRS), Health Services Research Scientist (for HSR&D), and Rehabilitation Research Scientist (for RR&D) applies to non-clinician Ph.D. scientists who are principal investigators on non-mentored Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funded, peer-reviewed research programs. There is no separate application process for the Research Scientist.

b. The Research Scientist designation is for the term of research funding and is renewable indefinitely, as long as the individual continues to receive VA peer-reviewed research support.

c. Scientists designated as Research Scientist may receive salary support consistent with percent effort in their research proposal.

d. Salary support may be extended for up to 1 year following termination of research support, provided efforts are made to secure continued funding.

5. Research Career Scientist

a. The Research Career Scientist tier consists of two levels; the entry level is Research Career Scientist. The Research Career Scientist review committee will select the most distinguished Research Career Scientist awardees as Senior Research Career Scientists.

b. The title Research Career Scientist may be awarded to established, independent investigators who have distinguished themselves through scientific achievement and who contribute to the VA research program through participation in research activities such as: training and mentoring junior VA scientists; functioning as a resource for the research community; serving on VA research or other committees; and collaborating with clinician investigators. A limited number of awards will be available for all three R&D services. Research Career Scientists must be in receipt of VA research funding or must have received such funding in the past, followed by other national peer-reviewed research support. Academic appointments must be at the Associate Professor or Professor level. Applications will be reviewed by a Research Career Scientist Committee established by the appropriate R&D Service. VA medical facilities may submit no more than two nominees for Research Career Scientist to each R&D Service each fiscal year.

c. Scientists with a minimum of 6 years of independent research support may be nominated for a Medical Research Career Scientist (for MRS), Health Services Research Career Scientist (for HSR&D), or Rehabilitation Research Career Scientist (for RR&D) award. Initial awards are for 5 years and are renewable indefinitely, subject to review by the appropriate Research Career Scientist Committee. Renewal is contingent on availability of funds and is dependent on continuation of peer-reviewed research support and participation in research activities such as:

training and mentoring junior VA scientists; functioning as a resource for the research community; serving on VA research or other committees; and collaborating with clinician investigators. Research Career Scientists will be reviewed by the appropriate Research Career Scientist Committee during the third year of each 5-year award. If early termination of the award is recommended following the review, salary support for 1 year may be provided.

6. **Senior Research Career Scientist.** Well-established Research Career Scientists who are recognized internationally as leaders in their field may be selected for Senior Medical Research Career Scientist (for MRS), Senior Health Services Research Career Scientist (for HSR&D), or Senior Rehabilitation Research Career Scientist (for RR&D) awards by the appropriate Research Career Scientist Committee. These senior level awards are for 7 years and are renewable indefinitely, subject to committee review. Renewal is contingent on availability of funds and is dependent on continuation of peer-reviewed research support and participation in research activities such as: training and mentoring junior VA scientists; functioning as a resource for the research community; serving on VA research or other committees; and collaborating with clinician investigators. Senior Research Career Scientists will be reviewed by the appropriate Research Career Scientist Committee during the fourth year of each 7-year award. If early termination of the award is recommended following the review, salary support for 1 year may be provided. Non-clinician Ph.D. scientists selected for the Senior Research Career Scientist awards must have previously held a Research Career Scientist award for a minimum period of 5 years.

7. **Salary.** Research Career Scientists and Senior Research Career Scientists are eligible to receive VA salary support. Some VA or university committee and teaching responsibilities are considered appropriate for a fully VA-supported Research Career Scientist. VA salary support for the Research Career Scientist will be reduced commensurate with the reduction of research time available if the investigator holds significant administrative positions at the VA or university.

8. **Evaluation.** Nominees for Research Career Scientist awards will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- a. A record of successful past and current VA research support and/or successful competition as a principal investigator for significant, extra-VA research funding from a national program that utilizes a level of scientific peer review equivalent to that of the VA;
- b. A minimum of 5/8 time research-related commitment to the VA;
- c. Publications in widely-read refereed journals, particularly as the first or senior author;
- d. Invitations to speak or chair sessions at national or international meetings;
- e. Membership on national scientific advisory or peer review committees or editorial boards of scientific journals;
- f. Recognition by peers as a leader in a research field;

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g. Interaction with clinicians and/or managers in support of the patient care program of a VA medical facility; and

h. An active role in the training of young scientists and in formal teaching.

9. **Deadline.** The deadline for submission of applications for Research Career Scientist awards from all R&D Services will be March 1 and September 1, annually.

10. The Research Career Scientist award authorizes the medical facility to seek a career civil service appointment for the designee. The awardee must, however, compete successfully for such an appointment within the Federal Personnel System.

11. Current Associate Research Career Scientists and Research Career Scientists will, upon their renewal date, be designated Research Career Scientist or Senior Research Career Scientist, respectively, at the recommendation of the appropriate Research Career Scientist Committee and with the concurrence of the appropriate R&D Service Director and Chief Research and Development Officer. Non-clinician Ph.D. scientists who currently receive VA investigator-initiated research funding will automatically receive the Research Scientist designation. Non-clinician Ph.D. scientists who are currently salaried under cost center 104 will receive the Research Scientist designation, and will continue to receive their salary through cost center 104 subject to receipt of continued peer-reviewed research support.

12. **Inquiries:** For further information contact:

a. Medical Research:	Gregory Crowe, M.A.	202 273-8912
b. Health Services Research	Joseph Gough, M.A.	202 273-8254
c. Rehabilitation R&D	Laura Bowman, M.B.A.	202-273-8238

13. **Responsible Office:** The Office of Research and Development (12) is responsible for the contents of this Notice.

14. **Recertification:** This VHA Notice will be recertified on or before the last working day of April 2003.

S/ Thomas Garthwaite, M.D. for
Kenneth W. Kizer, M.D., M.P.H.
Under Secretary for Health

Attachment

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ATTACHMENT A

**FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS FOR
RESEARCH CAREER SCIENTIST DESIGNATION**

Instructions For Preparation And Submission Of Proposals

1. Two proposals will be accepted by each Research and Development (R&D) Service from a medical facility during a fiscal year. Proposals should consist of single-spaced typed pages. Use only letter quality print; do not use a dot matrix printer. Do not use photo reduction or small fonts.
2. Each proposal should consist of the following materials:
 - a. A cover sheet listing the following information in the order specified:
 - (1) Research Career Scientist nomination to the appropriate R&D Service.
 - (2) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center.
 - (3) Name of nominee.
 - (4) Nominee's date of birth.
 - (5) Position currently held and proposed.
 - (6) Nominee's current VA employment status (in 8ths).
 - (7) Number of years employed by VA as a Ph.D. scientist.
 - (8) Nominee's current grade and step.
 - (9) Nominee's academic title (indicate tenure status).
 - (10) Location of nominee's laboratory.
 - (11) Statement of nominee's working relationships with other investigators and interactions at the medical center.
 - (12) A statement describing the research area of the nominee and its relevance to VA healthcare.
 - (13) Current VA funding (amount, title of project, role; i.e., principal or co-principal investigator) and year of last approved Merit Review or other VA research support.

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(14) Current extra-VA funding (amount, title of project, source, complete grant number, years of support role (principal or co-principal investigator).

(15) Five letters of support. The letters should provide input on the investigator's reputation as a scientist, standing in his or her chosen field of research, and other factors which may be relevant to the evaluation process.

(16) Name, title, and signature of the Associate Chief of Staff.

b. A letter of support from the R&D Committee.

c. A breakdown of research funding history, both VA and extra-VA, in spreadsheet format.

d. For current VA funded research, completed: VA Form 10-1313-2, Merit Review Application – Summary Description of Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-3, Merit Review Application – Current Funds and First Year Request for Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-4, Merit Review Application – Estimated Expenses of Program/Project; VA Form 10-1313-7, Merit Review Application – Investigator's Total VA and Non-VA Research Support (Current and Pending); and VA Form 10-1313-8, Merit Review Application – Investigator's Total VA and Non-VA Research/Development Support.

e. For all current non-VA funded research, budget page and abstract.

f. Curriculum vitae.

g. Two publications chosen by the nominee as being representative of his or her work.

3. **Submission.** Submit the original and ten copies of the Nomination Proposal to:

Research Career Scientist Nominations
Department of Veterans Affairs
Appropriate R&D Service (title and mail code)
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

4. **Due Date.** Applications will be reviewed semi-annually. Deadline for receipt of applications is March 1 and September 1.